The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JAY K. KATZEN

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INTERVIEW

Q: Jay, I wonder if you could give us a little bit of your background, sort of where'd you come from?

KATZEN: Thank you, Stu. I was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1936. I attended public schools. I graduated from Princeton in 1958, majoring in political science. I then got my masters at Yale the following year and entered the Foreign Service in 1959.

I served in the office of budget in the department, then had basic officer training and French language training. Thereafter, I was assigned to Sydney as consular, then commercial, officer. I served there from 1960 to '62 and then returned to the department for African language training, during which period, over a year, I studied Swahili, Lingala, and Kirundi prior to being assigned to what still was the U.S. Legation in Usumbura, Burundi, presently our U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura. I was reassigned from Burundi in 1964 to what still was the U.S. Embassy in Leopoldville, Congo, now Kinshasa, Zaire. I served there until 1966, then returned to the department to be desk officer for Rwanda, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Madagascar, and Mauritius. In 1968-69, I studied Romanian and then was assigned as commercial, thereafter political, officer at the American Embassy in Bucharest, Romania, where I served from 1969 to '71, then was reassigned to the American Embassy in Bamako, Mali, as DCM. I served as DCM there from '71 through '73. Thereafter I was assigned to the U.S. Mission to the U.N. in New York, where I served until 1977. I was then reassigned to the office of the vice president here in Washington, then to the National War College at Fort McNair, then assigned to reopen our embassy in Brazzaville, Congo, where I served as chargé d'affaires. Then, in 1978, I returned to Washington and served as political advisor to the World Administrative Radio Conference, in which capacity I served until July of 1979. I then began a period of leave without pay, during which period I served as advisor to the chairmen of the boards of five large multinationals, advising them on investment prospects both in North America and overseas. I retired formally from the department in 1983 and have continued in the capacity I held during the time which I left the department on leave without pay through the present time.

Q: How did you develop an interest in foreign affairs?

KATZEN: Stu, it seemed to pull together, and it still does-- all the interests I had: first, serving the country, secondly, working with people and problem solving as well as traveling. And it certainly more than adequately fulfilled those interests.

Q: You came into the Foreign Service in 1959. Was there a Foreign Service class that you came in with?

KATZEN: I initially came in as a staff officer, since the Foreign Service exam had not been given in the winter of 1958. So I went to graduate school that year, came in as a staff

officer, took the officers' test in December of '59, and then came in with the officers' class in May of 1960.

Q: I wonder if you could characterize the class, the cohorts you came in with--not only where they came from and what they were like, but what was their outlook towards the role of the United States and what they were going to do.

KATZEN: We had a very enthusiastic class. I guess there were about 25 members: most of those whose whereabouts I know now, have retired or have left the department otherwise. We had only one woman in an obviously predominantly male class. I was one of the youngest in the class; I think the average age was about 25 or 26, most of whom had done graduate work. They were dedicated, very well-trained men and women, each of whom looked forward to a lifetime career in State. They were intelligent and flexible individuals, most of whom also looked forward to a career without extraordinary specialization. I think one of the attractions of State at that time, certainly to me and, I think it's fair to say, to them, was that they would move from being an economic to a commercial to a consular to a political to an administrative function. They were well trained in languages, each of whom had a background which involved an international interest. As I recall, there were not physics majors or people who had done things other than primarily in international affairs.

Q: Your first assignment was to Sydney, where you served first as a consular officer and then as a commercial officer. What was your impression of this job? How did it hit you? Was it what you expected?

KATZEN: It was even more than I expected. I had been trained in French for it, which was not all that appropriate but I did get to use it later on. It was a wonderful assignment. I had dedicated bosses who also believed in a geographical rotation program, so that I had assignments in Brisbane and in Canberra as well as my principal tour in Sydney. These were men and women who shared that dedication of my colleagues in the basic officers' course, and welcomed me warmly as another member of a very successful fraternity, if you will.

Q: You were dealing not only with the consular side but with commercial things. What was your impression of America and Australia as far as the American business response to developing things in Australia at that time? We're talking the early sixties.

KATZEN: Well, first, on the consular side, it was a moment when I became very conscious of the fact that the American vice consul was, for many Australians, the very first American whom they had met. And that, however busy a day, or what we thought were busy days, it was important to keep a smile and be very courteous, at a time when we had, as you remember, those laborious forms that we had to go through with applicants, inquiring whether they were coming to America to assassinate the president.

Q: Or engage in an immoral sexual act, which I always thought was a...

KATZEN: Well, I was a bachelor at the time and I remember I had a young lady of whom I asked that question, and she looked at me wistfully and said, "Only once, sir."

In any event, turning to the commercial side, we had a very aggressive section at the time. I do remember a period where I did use some of that French, traveling through French-speaking territories in New Caledonia and through the Society Islands, trying to sell American glassware, among other products. I recall being met by people who would pick up a glass and heave it across a room and it wouldn't break, and then being asked whether the American product could do the same. And those are the still very successful French plastic glasses, which, as you know, say at the bottom: Made in France. And we didn't do very well.

Within Australia, though, we had a tremendous reservoir of goodwill toward the United States, generated, among other things, by the Battle of the Coral Sea. And the Australians wanted desperately to be friends and be more like Americans.

I remember going to a place on Bondi Beach in Sydney. I went up for a meat pie at a meat pie stand along the beach and asked the man for one, and he turned to me and said, "You've been to Hawaii for two weeks and you talk like a bloody Yank." And I said, "No, sir, I *am* a bloody Yank."

But it was a wonderful experience, it still was. And I guess this is something I'm pleased to say about each of my assignments. They were early days. There was a lot of pioneering which we still were doing, and that's what made it a lot of fun.

Q: Well, your next post really put you into the briar patch, where you stayed for most of your career--into Africa. And you certainly went into an area that was basically unknown by the Department of State. You were there from '63 to '64. What was it called at that time?

KATZEN: It was Usumbura, and the country had just been renamed Burundi after having been part of the U.N. Trust Territory, administered by Belgium, of Ruanda-Urundi. Burundi was led by a feudal kingdom, people who had emigrated from Ethiopia in the Sixteenth Century with their cattle. They formed about 13 percent of the population and worked out a contract with the majority Hutu people whereby the Tutsis, the minority, would run the country. They had various functions for administering the cattle, a type of arrangement which, in one form or another, endures. Whereas in neighboring Rwanda, the majority Hutus threw off their kingdom and established a republic.

While we were in Burundi, it was run by a gentleman called Mwami (king) Mwambutsa IV, who prompted some rather amusing moments in an environment which nevertheless was characterized principally by horrible genocide by the Tutsis of the majority Hutus, who periodically stepped forth and wanted to become more represented in the government.

The king, for instance, would summon the diplomatic corps to the palace periodically. Curtains would open, and he would appear in a magician's outfit, loving as he did to show his latest tricks which he had learned while he was visiting Europe.

One greater surprise was a trip he made, in the one airplane which was designated that of Royal Air Burundi, returning from Switzerland with a young European lady, Josie Villacourt, whom he introduced as his new queen. Josie, who was chewing gum upon her walk down the stairs from the aircraft, chose to remain queen in Burundi for only several weeks and quickly returned to her previous incarnation, which was as a stripper in a Lausanne casino.

The period we had there also was preoccupied with a young Chinese diplomat who, on his first day in Usumbura found refuge in the American Embassy.

Q: We're talking about somebody from mainland China, is that right?

KATZEN: Yes, that's right. And he in fact was, as of that moment, the highest-ranking Chinese to come over. He appeared in front of the embassy on the one day of the week that a courier came in from the airport, quite by coincidence. He had been looking for the Soviet Embassy, was unable to find it, but located ours, in front of which was standing our Greek local, John Sotiropoulos. And John, having a wonderfully Greek philosophy, when this fellow asked for asylum in Chinese, thought, "The thing ailing this man is that he hasn't had a good Greek breakfast." So he brought Dong back to his apartment, introduced him to his wife, and went to the airport to pick up the courier.

He came back to the embassy and found it surrounded by Burundi's army--all with bayonets pointing inward. The chargé at the time came out, and John inquired of him what the problem was and learned that the Burundi government, responding to a complaint by the Chinese, had accused us of kidnaping one of their diplomats. And John said, "Sir, I think I might know what they're talking about." He went back and scooped up the Chinese, who became our guest at the embassy for, oh, I guess it was in excess of three months time before he finally left. The Burundi government at that juncture asked a number of us to leave as well. That was when I moved to what still was Leopoldville.

Q: You were persona non grata, I assume?

KATZEN: Well, what happened was, the government asked us to reduce the size of our embassy; we reciprocated with their numbers in Washington.

Q: Your ambassador there at the time was Donald Dumont?

KATZEN: Yes.

Q: How did he deal with the Burundi government?

KATZEN: Don suggested to the department, in the person of Governor Harriman at the time, that as a gesture of goodwill both to China and to Burundi, the young Chinese be returned to his embassy. And that was not received well by the department, which said no, that will not be what is going to happen. And the Chinese, who had very good relations with Burundi at the time, kept at the Burundi government over this issue and it obviously exacerbated our own relations.

Q: The time you were there, did you see this, other than this particular manifestation, as a center of East-West competition between the Western powers and the Communist powers?

KATZEN: Curiously, in a very primitive way. The Chinese at the time literally had a window at their chancellery to which unsuccessful job applicants would go to collect an envelope which had some local currency in it, which was distributed with the good wishes of the Peoples' Republic of China.

When you compare that as technical assistance, as against road-building and education and health projects of the ensuing years, you see really how far back we were in less than 30 years. We were focusing on poultry and livestock projects, and distributing milk and PL 480 grain. Yet the Chinese, for their efforts, although they too got into agriculture and health thereafter, were probably making a lot more headway than we, by getting to what they really could describe as basic human needs. So that human relations, American-Burundi relations, I think were quite good, and this irritant was brought about by a third power rather than by any behavior on our part.

Q: At the time (you know, we're always trying to recreate the time), did it seem sort of that any of you thought: What the hell are we doing in the middle of Africa in a small country that has no particular influence, fighting the Americans and the Chinese over influence over this place?

KATZEN: Well, I think that certainly was something that occurred periodically to a number of us. Yet an enduring result of that experience for me is the realization, which you certainly share, that the uniqueness of Burundi is in fact not an exception, it's the rule.

That, while you and I got up at whatever time we did this morning to an electric alarm clock, had a warm shower and shave with an electric light as these days become shorter, went down and had coffee and eggs, and got into our cars and said goodbye to our wives, who have jobs, and (if they're still young enough at our age) to our, God bless them, healthy children as they went off to school, our experience rather than the Burundi experience is the rare one. The lesson of Burundi was that their life pattern, unfortunately, is the rule.

For them, is no electricity for that alarm clock. There is no hot water. And, in a number of subsequent assignments, for many people, I saw that there was no water. There were no

roads. There were no vehicles. There was no job to go to. There was no education. And the health was lamentable. So that, while we could wonder what we were doing there, the inescapable conclusion had to be that that was nevertheless the real world.

Q: Were we doing what we were doing there in the way of aid under sort of the cover of an East-West conflict, or were we doing it because it should be done?

KATZEN: I think there was probably a little bit of both. I would say that the people who were implementing the aid programs were doing it because they felt that roads needed to be built in order for people to get their products to the market, in order to get them on the cash economy, in order to improve their life and so on. I would say that there was, though, on the level of the people who were more politically oriented, the feeling that: We help these people and they'll like us more than our adversaries, in the larger scope of things. So I would say that probably on the political side, there was less interest in calorie intake, and on the level of the people who were implementing the programs, probably less concern on the political side.

Q: When you left there because of this conflict over the Chinese diplomat... He did get out, is that right?

KATZEN: He did get out and I think he's somewhere in the States now, I'm just not sure where.

Q: Well, then you went to Leopoldville--it was Leopoldville, not Kinshasa. You were there from '64 to '66. What were you doing there?

KATZEN: My title was labor attaché. I was within the political section, and my function, among others, was to maintain liaison with the nascent labor union development. I also had responsibilities for following different parts of the country politically. And, as you'll recall, that was a time when a lot of names (which you and I remember but now have been forgotten) were on the world's headlines.

We had a government then headed by Adoula. Most of the country, though, was not in the hands of the central government. We had a rebel government in Stanleyville, now Kisangani. We had another rebel government in Elisabethville, now Lubumbashi. Another rebel government in Luluabourg. It was a period during which the central government, with U.N. backing, was endeavoring to reassert itself and bring the country under central control again. The names of the time included Lumumba and Kasavubu and, obviously, Tshombe.

Q: Well, Lumumba was dead, wasn't he, by that time?

KATZEN: Lumumba was dead. The rebellion in the north was being undertaken in the name of Lumumba.

Q: Was this the Simba group?

KATZEN: The Simbas were primarily in the northeast of the country, in Kivu Province. "Simba" is simply the Swahili word for lion, and the Simbas believed that they had a magic, which usually was common water, called adawa (again a Swahili word), which would make them oblivious to the bullets that were being shot at them. So you often had the Simbas running into battle with, ostensibly, their adawa on and getting mowed down.

Q: It didn't work.

KATZEN: It didn't work.

Q: Were you there at the time of Dragon Rouge, the rescue effort?

KATZEN: Yes, I was.

Q: Could you explain what precipitated this and how it was viewed from the embassy, because this was a very crucial situation, and what you recall about this period?

KATZEN: Sure. We had a very dynamic ambassador, Mac Godley, and a very energetic DCM, called Bob Blake, and the head of our political section was Monty Stearns. And they, quite correctly, conveyed to a very concerned Washington that the movement in Stanleyville, as unstable as it was and supported by external forces, could and would kill the many Western hostages which it had captured in its...

Q: Had the hostages already been captured when you arrived?

KATZEN: Yes, indeed. Among them, five people from our consulate in Stanleyville, who were being held captive in Stanleyville. And the north and northeast of the country also was being held by these same forces. It became clear to both the Belgians and to us, as well as to the French who had citizens there in greater numbers than we, that these people would be killed by the rebels if a rescue were not undertaken.

Accordingly, it was decided in Washington and in Brussels that an effort would be mounted, using American aircraft, C-130s staged out of Ascension Island, from which Belgian paratroopers would drop and serve to liberate the people on the ground. That happened in November of '64, and was followed by successive drops on Paulis and other places in the north and northeast.

A number of Americans and others, as you know, were killed, among them the Reverend Carlson, whom we had made an effort to free. The effort did serve to beat back the rebellion and to free the overwhelming majority of the captives.

Q: What was the embassy role? Were you involved in doing anything?

KATZEN: Yes, we were very active participants in the drop. The knowledge of it was very closely held, obviously, but we were active participants in the planning and the ultimate resolution of the liberation.

Similarly, thereafter officers were sent by the embassy, the original request coming from the Congolese, to go inspect villages and towns which had been liberated. Accordingly, there were a lot of activities in which career Foreign Service officers were sent out on military aircraft with weapons to visit recently liberated or, in several cases, not-quite-liberated towns.

I went with our air attaché to one of those, Lodja, on one occasion and found that the governor--who welcomed us at lunch and brought us to the nearby cathedral (and this was a town that very recently had been "liberated," some two days before), where we saw a young Congolese boy who had been sacrificed on the altar at the Catholic cathedral--entertained us at lunch and then took us prisoner, saying that they had located a radio on the aircraft and therefore we were spies and were going to be held captive. This was a gentleman who had not quite been liberated.

We were held in the slammer for several days and were ultimately freed when the Congolese struck a bargain that enabled us to go if two conditions were met: one, that we stopped eating quite as much food as we were of their prison stores, and secondly, that we took the nephew of the governor to Luluabourg with us in the plane.

We did that. The nephew literally had a pistol at the pilot's head during the flight. He did not, though, understand English. The fellow at the tower in Luluabourg did. The plane landed, the fellow was taken prisoner. And Mobutu, several weeks later, took the erstwhile governor prisoner as well.

But, as the Belgian press described them, these were Wild West days. At the same time, they were nation-building days. And I think that we can, as Americans, take a lot of satisfaction in what was a dynamic policy.

Q: You know, one of the great conflicts, and it was being fought in the United States, too, at the time, was with Katanga, which was really the mineral-rich area, with Tshombe. Tshombe was in his prime then, wasn't he?

KATZEN: That's right.

Q: And there were two schools of thought. One was: We've got to keep the Congo together and all this. The other one was: Let's be practical, fellas, we've got economic interests down in Katanga. We can work with Tshombe, he knows how to deal with Belgian and American commercial interests. Let's back him and the hell with the rest of this. I mean, this was almost an American ideological fight. How did we feel at the embassy? Were there these divisions within the embassy?

KATZEN: There were no divisions within the embassy. The fascinating part in that decision- making process was that it was literally made by so few people to start with. I was in the department thereafter, and it became apparent to me that the philosophy in resisting the Belgian wish to, as you say, accommodate a government in Katanga that was both rich and seemingly well administered was based on the ideology of a very few Africa policy makers who felt at the time, quite correctly, that if we were to let colonial borders change (and this was in the early Sixties) in the Congo, that they then could be changed all over the continent, with a lot of insurrection, revolution, bloodshed, and problems for the future.

And I think that we've seen, had that border changed, that that indeed would have happened in a variety of places: Biafra--again it would have been a greater temptation to let Biafra go had Katanga gone, if you will. And as we look around the continent now, we can say the same of a part of Cameroon, certainly of Ethiopia, possibly of Sudan, and in a variety of other places. So this is a policy which may have not been entirely successful or liked (and we certainly hear now in the Middle East of these being artificial borders and let's change them), but in Africa, for better or worse, it's been a policy that has held countries together.

Q: Was this basically accepted within the embassy?

KATZEN: Yes, there was no difference that I heard, certainly among the people with whom I dealt. No, there wasn't. And Tshombe, as you know, came to power as prime minister and president during the period that I was in Leopoldville. So we were dealing with Prime Minister Tshombe of the Congo rather than president of Katanga, which he previously had been.

Q: I wonder if you could talk a little about your impressions of your dealings with the Congolese in the government and how you looked upon it at that time.

KATZEN: One of the characteristics, I think, of Belgian colonial policy at the time (which has changed dramatically with new generations of Belgians returning to Africa--oftentimes the sons and grandsons of the Belgian colonialists originally there) was to place their African subjects, be they in the Trust Territory or in Belgian Congo, in a state of paternalism, if you will, unlike the policy of the French and the British.

As such, as you know, only a handful of Congolese were trained beyond the secondary level of education, basically because the Belgians thought this would all go on for much longer and maybe somewhere along the way they would extend that training process. Accordingly (and I think the Congolese would be the first to acknowledge this), basic concepts of running things simply presented them with a problem because they lacked the training.

In the early days of independence, Belgians were appalled that Congolese would go into the zoo in Leopoldville and kill the animals, and that the roads quickly deteriorated, and

that the airplanes were not serviced, and that the Congolese would come at the last minute to doctors to get treatment, and that there was not an appreciation of a system of laws.

What they, I think, failed to respect was the fact that the parks had been closed to the Africans, who could not go in and appreciate what it was aesthetically to admire an animal behind bars, that there was no real appreciation of maintaining roads because there weren't vehicles to travel them, and insofar as maintaining an aircraft, very few Africans traveled by air. So there was no identification with the principal institutions that made the place work. Insofar as government went, during the early days of Congolese administration, votes were bought and sold as one watched a parliament in session. And yet there was not the basis for the Congolese to have an appreciation of how a democracy legitimately and honestly functions.

So that a lot of our dealing, as Americans, was to try to instill some sense of how things could and should work for their own benefit. I think that the embassy and Washington can take pride, with the Congolese, at the progress that has been made. Hell, we're talking about just a 30-year spectrum. And while Mobutu obviously is not everyone's angel, there's been an awful lot of progress that has been made.

There's an awful lot of progress that needs to be made: AIDS, the incredible cost of just living, the incredible cost of just getting enough food to eat, unemployment, rural education, transportation, communications and so on. They have a lot of work to do.

Q: How about when you went to, say, ministries or officials? This was a difficult role. I mean we weren't the former colonial power. We were there, we were Americans, and one can talk about, well, we try to train, but in your day-to-day dealing, this wasn't your job. I mean, how did you deal with these...?

KATZEN: Well, you had primarily to have a good sense of humor. It's a great frustration, certainly for current Foreign Service officers, and it's difficult for you and for me to understand as well, that it's so difficult to do now what we did then. You have high walls around embassies now for, in most places, good reasons. What we did then was to get out with the people as best we could, slap backs, visit a lot of folk, go out to nightclubs at night, have a good time, travel a lot with the people and get to know their problems. In the daily life at the ministries, that sense of humor, though, was a requirement.

I remember being in a line to present a diplomatic note to a gentleman who was the foreign minister at the time, and I was in back of the papal nuncio, who was doing the same thing. And the foreign minister was very visible after awhile behind a screen, in bed with a lovely young lady. The nuncio turned and said, "Young man, perhaps you would do better to look the other way."

So there were moments like that, that were requiring of a lot of patience and not demanding a response such as we might expect elsewhere. Again, these were really pioneering times.

Q: Well, you were dealing in part with the labor movement. Was there much of a labor movement?

KATZEN: Interestingly, there was. And I think that that reflects upon your earlier question as well. In each of these countries, as is the case in much of Eastern Europe now, we were prized because we were Americans. We were something different: we had different music, we had blue jeans, and we had a lot of things that differed in style as well. We liked, and I think it radiated that we liked, what we were doing. We were not there because of any religious or necessarily patriotic cause; we enjoyed what we were doing.

The labor movement, when I arrived, had three forces: one, the Christian Labor Union, which was the creation of the Belgian Christian labor movement; the ICFTU-generated and AFL/CIO-supported union; and another union which was independent of both of those, along the lines of Belgian socialists.

When I arrived, the AFL/CIO and the Department of Labor's International Labor Affairs Office felt that it was important to bolster the AFL/CIO-supported man, Alphonse Kithima by name, to the detriment of an equally democracy- loving leader of the Christian Labor Union.

I had not had much training in labor movement affairs, and yet it seemed to me that our place was to be friends with both organizations and with the independent labor union movement as well. And it was a policy which I successfully was able to encourage Washington to accept, at the same time encouraging the Belgians to recognize that we were not competing with them on the labor scene. That we respected each of the movements, just as we hoped that they would respect the movement which the AFL/CIO was supporting.

Q: How about the role of the AFL/CIO, because they had a very aggressive policy, which in some ways almost bypassed the Department of State, or at least they had a veto on things. I mean, how did you find the hand of the AFL/CIO in your work?

KATZEN: I found that I got along just fine with the people from the movement. I went back to Washington early on for consultation, and went to each American labor union leader who was interested in international affairs, and who in turn played a role in decision-making with Irving Brown and others over at the AFL/CIO, and said, "Look, I'm a new guy on the block. I can only learn from you, and I want to. By the same token, these are my observations after a few months on the scene. Let's keep cross-fertilizing and keep talking to each other about developments."

I found that that worked. I was thereby able to establish contacts for Congolese visiting the States to visit one or another labor union. And I encouraged American labor union leaders, when they came to the Congo, to meet with leaders other than the man whom

they had been backing in the past, and for the Belgians similarly to speak to our people and our people to the Belgians. And it did work.

I must say I'm familiar with some animosity around the world that had existed. I did not experience any of that myself.

One of the reasons the labor union movement was appreciated and successful in the Congo was that it was one of the very few avenues along which the Congolese could advance. Teaching, and the Ministry were others. There were very few other areas where Congolese could expect to progress, and be recognized as progressing, from level to level within the Congo at that time. And so labor was one of them. And labor unions were relatively successful in getting a number of their demands met, which in their absence would have precluded workers from getting their demands filled.

Q: At that time, how did you and others in the embassy view what could best be described as the Soviet threat? The Congo again seems to have been a place where there was a focus of both East and West.

KATZEN: Very much so. And we were, there quite a bit more, I would say, than in Burundi, seized of that very fact. This was a battlefield of the Cold War, we felt. And there were Soviet arms and aircraft going to Stanleyville, providing materiel to the rebels. Similarly, materiel from other sources was coming into what still was Albertville and other areas that were rebel-held. And the prime object of the embassy at that juncture was the reestablishment of central government authority over the country, which also was the objective of the United Nations.

Q: Did you have any contact with the Soviets at all?

KATZEN: At that juncture it seems to me we saw few Soviets, and the Soviets were regarded as an adversary by the central government as well. We were on close terms with the Belgians, with the French, with the Israelis, with the Germans and British, and we worked together on a number of aid and obviously politically oriented projects.

Q: Mac Godley was your ambassador. What was his style? How did he operate?

KATZEN: Well, he was, and is, a perfectly wonderful man. He used his staff. He was very close to his staff, respected each one rather than trying to do the whole job himself, and called upon his staff to work together with him in implementing his policies. He was a charger, a leader. He wanted his policy, which was an embassy policy, to be accepted and acted upon by the department. So I would say that the embassy in Leopoldville under his leadership was the leader, if you will, in the Congo policy at the time. It was the embassy policy which was accepted and implemented and encouraged in turn by Washington.

Q: You didn't feel a heavy hand from Washington then?

KATZEN: No, we didn't. There were feelings in some European capitals, Brussels obviously among them, that we didn't want to be terribly independent of what the Belgians were trying to do. And there were some rough edges in that relationship. But I think, all in all, it worked out very well, and certainly the relationship with Washington was successful. Governor Harriman liked very much what we were trying to do.

Q: It, in many ways, is the greatest fun in the Foreign Service to be in a place that's right in the spotlight, isn't it, which the Congo was at that time?

KATZEN: It sure is. And I've been blessed. I think each of my assignments was one where something was happening-- although most officers would probably say the same thing about their current assignments.

Q: You left Kinshasa in 1966 and came back to Washington. What were you doing there?

KATZEN: I was desk officer for five African countries-- Rwanda, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Madagascar, and Mauritius--in the old Office of Central Africa and Malagasy Affairs in AF, the Bureau of African Affairs.

Q: I wonder if you could talk a little bit about Madagascar. It's there, it's lumped under Africa, but it seems to sit off to one side. What were our relations with that area and its interest to the United States?
KATZEN: Madagascar and the United States have had diplomatic relations for a long, long time, and our relationship with the Malagasy were at that time very close. Thereafter were some rough patches, but we've returned to a good relationship with them presently.

The Malagasy people are quite different from their brothers on the continent. Their origins, particularly of the Merina people, are instead in the islands of the Pacific whence they originated. Madagascar had a kingdom until French colonial rule. Very proud, very well-developed compared to a number of countries around the world. Our relations at the time were excellent.

They were troubled by the tragic death of the ambassador in Washington at the time, Louis Racoutmalala. He also was accredited to the U.N., and had brought his staff to Bear Mountain Park outside of New York, where, while he and his group were playing volleyball, he was struck on the head by an errant football and tragically died in Georgetown Hospital thereafter. That was obviously a tragedy that hit our relations at the time, but otherwise they were very good and have returned to a very good...

Q: Were we pressing at all for bases there or anything like that?

KATZEN: No, at the time we weren't. Subsequently we had a NASA tracking station, and the Malagasy felt that they did not have sufficient autonomy over it and were not receiving proper compensation from it either.

I'll tell you an amusing story, though, that sort of typified the level of importance of what I was doing with Madagascar at the time. I went to visit the primate center at Duke about five years ago, when my son was still an undergraduate there. My son showed me, along with the director of the institution, Elwyn Simons, cages filled with lemurs, which are wonderful creatures with long furry tails.

Q: Big eyes.

KATZEN: Big eyes and they originate in Madagascar. And Elwyn Simons said, "Katzen, Katzen, I know that name from somewhere," and went through his desk and found the original agreement wherein Madagascar exported a colony of five lemurs to Yale. At that time he was head of the primate center at Yale, and subsequently brought his five, now two hundred, lemurs from New Haven to Durham. Elwyn and I have become very fast and close friends, based on an agreement which I had forgot having signed.

Q: Of these other countries that you were dealing with, I suppose the thorniest relations were with Congo-Brazzaville, weren't they?

KATZEN: They were, increasingly, at that time, but the difficulties with them had really become so even before that time, when our embassy staff was thrown in the slammer and relations subsequently were...

Q: What was the problem?

KATZEN: The problem, I think, was encouraged by the Soviets. The Soviets had a large presence there, and a lot of the Soviet largesse for the Congo rebellion was funneled from Brazzaville. And the problem basically was that the Soviets were encouraging the Brazzaville Congolese to want to make life more difficult for us, so that they would have a freer rein at funding of their efforts across the river in Leopoldville. I think subsequently the Congolese have acknowledged that a lot of the source of that problem was Soviet inspiration.

Q: In all the five countries you were dealing with, what was your major problem?

KATZEN: I can't say that there really were many problems. The joy of the whole exercise was the chance to work with the wonderful people for whom I worked at the time: Dean Brown, Bill Schaufele, Art Tienken and Roy Haverkamp, Charlie Rushing, Armie Lee. We had a super staff, again perhaps to a great degree mirroring the relationship we had had at one time or another in Leopoldville, once we were in the department.

I then (and this probably was the time of greatest stress within that office) became part of what was yet another edition of the Congo desk: the Congo task force, or working group, up in the Op Center, where we dealt with an effort encouraged by mercenaries to retake a

part of Zaire and throw the government at the time out. These were, as you recall, forces which came from Northern Angola and tried to regain control.

One of the most memorable parts of that exercise was, literally every midnight when each of us was on the desk, having Dean Rusk call the desk watch officer at the time and ask how things were and wish him or her a good night.

Q: Did you have any feeling at that time that maybe the CIA was playing a game that you didn't know about in these mercenaries efforts?

KATZEN: No, I didn't, because I think that most of what the agency was doing within the Congo while we were there, and subsequently, was generally well known to us. Obviously there were a lot of operational things that were not, and didn't need to be, known by everyone. At least that was my impression. I always got along well with the agency, and so I had no great feeling of any conflict of interest to what various agencies were doing.

In my activities on Rwanda, I remember a call I got from a young lady, asking whether Kenya or Dr. Leakey were dangerous to visit, and asking ultimately about Rwanda. And I enthusiastically encouraged her to travel: first, to Kenya, secondly, to meet Dr. Leakey, and then ultimately, to go to Rwanda. About a half an hour later, after that call, I got an irate call from this young lady's fiancé, from, I think it was, Northwestern, saying, "How could you do this and encourage my fiancée to leave me?" Well, the young lady was Dian Fossey, who went on to a distinguished career in Rwanda.

Insofar as Mauritius was concerned, I formed a relationship with the first premier at the time, then-Prime Minister, Ramgoolam, and helped begin American relations with a subsequently independent Mauritius.

So the joy of that job was switching gears all the time, with a dedicated group of professionals.

Q: This was your first time in Washington. What was your feeling about how the African Bureau operated and where it was in the pecking order? Or was it able to operate because nobody was very interested? I'm thinking of the principals.

KATZEN: I think that, primarily because of Soapy Williams and Joe Palmer and other activist assistant secretaries, as well as the interest by Americans who also shared that interest in Africa, and because it was new, AF had then a significant role within thinking at a period when there obviously were a lot of other things that were filling, and ultimately eclipsed Africa on the plate--notably, obviously, Vietnam. But I had the feeling, and certainly it was encouraged by others, that the exercise of seizing interest on the Sixth and Seventh Floors and ultimately the White House of things African was not all that difficult a process.

For instance, one of the things that happened during that period was to get an otherwise very much preoccupied President Johnson to receive, among other Africans, the president of Rwanda. So there was time that others perceived as necessary to do things African. And, as you well know, there were a lot of American resources that were going into Africa on the aid side.

Q: Did South Africa and the problems of apartheid play any factor in Africa as you saw it? Or was this something sort of over the horizon?

KATZEN: I think it was generally over the horizon. Certainly there were African leaders who saw that this was something that was repugnant to them in the form of apartheid; others of whom, perhaps the same people also, who recognized that there was an economic development within South Africa that was very significant at the same time. Remember that Angola and Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia were still not independent territories, and so there was clearly a buffer between Central Africa and South Africa. Similarly, also recall that a number of the mercenaries who were fighting for the central government in Leopoldville at one time or another had their origins, although not their aegis, in Southern Africa--Mike Hoare and Alistair Wicks...

Q: You went into Romanian training and went to Romania in '68 to '69. Was that a conscious decision, or was this just a normal career move?

KATZEN: Well, it was the way a number of decisions were made at that time. When I was in Sydney, and following on an interest I had at graduate school, I had applied for African language training and got that after my Sydney experience, which projected me into two assignments using those languages.

I had wanted to get out of AF for a bit. I had lunch, quite arbitrarily, with a pal of mine over at Rich's, the old delicatessen near the department, and spoke to him of my interest. He had been in Bucharest previously, and he said, "Hey, the ambassador is in town today, why don't you chat with him about that." I did, and several months later entered, with my wife, Romanian language training.

Q: What were you doing in Romania?

KATZEN: I was initially commercial officer for nine months and then political officer. I had been trained in Romanian language, as I mentioned, prior to going there. One of the lyrical parts of the assignment was that, just two weeks after I arrived, the Nixon visit took place, which gave the entire embassy staff, particularly Romanian language officers, an exposure at a level which they had previously not experienced. Similarly, it showed the Romanians that there were a lot of things that Americans did in a fashion that was not dissimilar to the way they would like to do things. So there was an experience of working together and a very brief window in the presence of our embassy in Bucharest which enabled us to travel, albeit under significant surveillance, and to see things that, prior to that and thereafter, were difficult to be visited.

Q: Could you give us an idea, because we're talking now, in 1990, where Romania has gone through both a change and not so much a change, but what was the situation in Romania in '69 to '71?

KATZEN: Nicolae Ceausescu had been in power I think for three years, having replaced a man called Gheorghe Gheorghiu- Dej. Ceausescu was a very forceful Communist, a self-styled Romanian patriot, who at least in the early days I think felt that he could carve out an independence vis-à-vis the West which could gain him foreign exchange and investment, which would be good to foster his own economy, his own industrialization, while maintaining a very rigid Stalinist control at home. A control which included a very distasteful security apparatus as well as a cult of the leader which rivaled those in Bulgaria and...

Q: Had it already developed by the time you were there?

KATZEN: Yes, it clearly had. Two things we did made our time more pleasurable: one, we lived in a workers' apartment building (which subsequently came down with an earthquake), and secondly, we had our boy, Timothy, as the first American enrolled in a Romanian kindergarten. I vividly remember Timothy coming home one day and wondering why I was going to work on Nicolae Ceausescu's birthday. So there was already that cult burgeoning. Timothy also at one juncture reflected that it was interesting that I took as my birthday August 23, which also happened to be that which Romania celebrated as its liberation day. So there clearly were quirks in the system. But the bestiality of Ceausescu and his wife became far more intense as the years went by. These were days when that had not quite been as intense as it ultimately became, at least for those outside it.

Q: What were our interests in Romania at the time, particularly culminating in a presidential visit, which in Eastern Europe was practically unheard of?

KATZEN: The feeling was that by diversifying Romania's ties economically, culturally, and industrially, a web could be developed that made it even more difficult for Romania to extricate herself from and for the Soviets to force them out of. A position which, from the Romanian point of view, was seen as one which would gather support for them in times of adversity, if, for instance, they chose to criticize and not participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia; similarly, to continue to maintain an Israeli presence in Bucharest.

Q: How much did our ties with Israel dominate our role in Romania?

KATZEN: Very little, basically because most of the Jewish population in Romania had already left. There was an apparatus that the Romanians always liked to point visitors toward, a rabbi, Rabbi Rosen, who also was very active in Communist Party activities. But religious services were not encouraged. In fact, I think that there were no kosher

butchers allowed nor cantors encouraged. So that whatever Jewish ritual existed, in the full sense of the word, I think had to be clandestine.

Q: Each time is different in an embassy. This time, was there a feeling of hope that things would change? Was it an optimistic feeling, or was our policy of encouraging them sort of accepted by the embassy? How did we feel about it?

KATZEN: I think there was a period of optimism there. And a feeling that because of our cooperation, for instance, in providing material after a ghastly spring flood they had, and other efforts at cooperation: space exhibits and trade fairs and so on, that this could be fostered. At the same time, though, the government clearly was led and held by a very vicious security operation.

Just parenthetically, what the Romanians would do on each newcomer was to run a profile, to see how that individual behaved, what his garbage looked like, what he had to talk about, for roughly a two-week period--electronic and personal surveillance. Then they would examine the raw material, data that they had developed on you and your spouse, and determine whether either was worth cultivating.

And if it were not (as it clearly was in my case), follow-ups were done in an almost burlesque way on an annual, alphabetical basis. So that a Finnish colleague of mine would call me when he was being put on heavy surveillance (his name being spelled just a few letters before mine) and say, "Jay, they'll be following you soon."

The Romanians got the last laugh on the Finns, incidentally, because of all the places the Finns thought were sacred and would not be violated by eavesdropping, the Romanians cleverly put a bug inside the thermostat of the Finnish ambassador's sauna.

So these had for Americans, for visitors, a burlesque aspect. When the plumbing didn't work, you could yell at the wall that Socialist plumbing clearly can't operate. And an hour later or so, Popescu, the plumber, would knock on the door--just having happened to be in the neighborhood.

Similarly, just before we left, we would tell the walls that there was this or that person who obviously had been arrested and isn't it a shame we can't say hello to him or her. And the next morning, as by levitation, he or she would appear in front of the door, looking pale but walking a poodle that clearly had been given to him or her for the day.

But the tragedy obviously is that while these may be burlesque moments for us, they were, and to a great degree continue to be, tragic moments for the Romanian people.

Q: We had no particular what we would today call a human rights program. Were we trying to get people out?

KATZEN: We would press the Romanians with lists of people who, either because of claims of dual citizenship or one reason or another, had applied for visas, some of whom were eligible for visas but could not get their documentation to leave Romania, and we would continually present those lists to the Romanians. It was not anywhere of the magnitude, I would say, of the program that Patt Derian and others moved toward during the Carter administration.

Q: How about your dealings with the Romanian officials? Did you find them responsive, or did everything have to come from up above?

KATZEN: It varied. Relationships with the people were very good. The annoyance for people was that, after speaking with us, they would then have to spend an afternoon preparing a report for the security on that contact. Humorously, our ambassador in the country, Leonard Meeker, often would not only chide the Romanians about their disrespect for the environment but would say, "Fine, let's have a morning meeting, because you'll require all afternoon, sir, to prepare your report."

But when there was business that could have been done...I mentioned earlier that I'd begun on the commercial side, and there were a number of American companies...Sears, Roebuck, as I recall, was interested in having Romania produce hammers for sale in the United States.

At first, the Romanians were absolutely floored by the volume that would be required on the production side. But secondly, when the inevitable glitches occurred, we learned that the director of the steel mill could not speak to his counterpart at the fabricating end. Instead, he needed to go through the central planning office. So that cumbersome bureaucracy, volume requirements, and quality control problems led to the end of that relationship.

Access, though, was greatly improved by the Nixon visit. There were a number of prominent Romanians whom embassy people met during the visit, through all parts of Romanian life, whom otherwise we likely would not have met. And those relationships endured. And the Romanians, for their side, could explain to the security people: Well, look, we met Smith during the Nixon visit and that's why we went to his house last night.

Q: How did the Vietnam War play in Romania?

KATZEN: Corneliu Manescu, who was foreign minister at the time and a very distinguished Romanian diplomat who was among the people who led to the ouster of Ceausescu at Christmastime, spoke to us frequently about ways whereby Romania could play some mediating role. Otherwise, it was not a source of great propaganda for the Romanians. The Soviets, obviously, and the Vietnamese, whose Viet Cong office had representation in Bucharest at the time, obviously played it up big. The media got standard Communist news agency stories, which they played up. The Romanian security periodically would use it as an issue for discussion, to try to see whether an American

was loyal or not to the cause. But beyond that, it was not an issue that daily was discussed.

Q: What was your impression of how the Soviets operated in Romania?

KATZEN: I'll give you two examples, because I think that they are very indicative of that.

Sarge Shriver had been ambassador in Paris and was exploring at the time running for governor of Maryland. Having seen how Bobby Kennedy had tested the waters in Warsaw during the visit that he had made there. Shriver decided to come over and visit Bucharest, anticipating that we would have crowds in the streets to greet Sarge Shriver as a member of the Kennedy family. Well, nothing very much happened at all. He and Mrs. Shriver were received by Ceausescu at the last minute, and he returned to Paris and ultimately to private life.

The Soviet ambassador, a man called Basov, came to the embassy one day thereafter, and pounded on the reception desk and said, "I have no appointment. I demand to see the ambassador." Which he did, I think he saw the chargé at the time, and said, "I demand to know why the American ambassador to Paris is visiting Romania." We explained to him what I just mentioned, and that had absolutely no effect upon him at all. He was a candidate member of the Central Committee, one of the two Soviet diplomats, I think, at the time who were, and later went on to become ambassador to Chile when Allende headed the government, but was clearly lacking in any ability to fathom that explanation.

Then a few months later, Manescu, the foreign minister who had served, as I mentioned, as president of the General Assembly in New York and at that time met Ambassador Shirley Temple Black, who was with our delegation in New York for that General Assembly, invited her to come visit Bucharest.

This time, Basov came back to the embassy again and said, in a wonderfully clumsy phrase, "I demand to know what Shirley Temple, American child actress, is doing in Romania." Again we explained the reason for her visit. And yet again he somehow felt in both instances that Soviet sovereignty over Romania (which didn't exist) had been violated by such visits.

Q: That's very, very odd--in the first place, the lack of finesse, and also the lack of understanding. You were a political officer in a state under tight Communist security with a personality cult and all, how did you go about your business?
KATZEN: We would, obviously, read the newspapers and other official material that came in the morning and see if there was anything among the tea leaves to be read that was worth pursuing. We would spend a fair amount of time talking to Romanian contacts, both within and outside the government, because it was at that time easy to do. Whether we got the truth or not was quite another matter. We traveled a lot, talking to a variety of people. We observed things like who was saying what, what the government orders at parades were, what materials, what foodstuffs were available, who was saying what to

whom. We talked an awful lot to people from other embassies and tried to triangulate whatever information we developed. And we leaned to a great extent on the basic matrix we knew of information that Washington was eager that we develop while we were there. So there were reporting requirements, and we tried to fit what we could learn against those requirements.

Q: What would Washington be interested in particularly?

KATZEN: Washington obviously was interested in what Romanian bilateral relations were with the Soviets, how they perceived those as going. What the leadership group was like, who was moving up, who was moving down, whether there was any movement at all. General welfare of the people. The role of the military, the role of the security. How the people in the interior were going vis-à-vis the people in Bucharest. The plight of the German and obviously the Hungarian minorities within Romania and how they were handled. How the workers in the mines were being treated. What the general feeling of Romanians was insofar as trying to increase the amount of independence, if you will, they had within the geography they lived. For instance, at that time there was some interest in getting the Romanians closer to the Greeks. Ceausescu, for his part, saw greater leverage coming his way by improving his relationship with the shah. So those are the kinds of things we kept an eye on, as well, obviously, as military movements, the extent to which the Romanians participated in Warsaw Pact operations and maneuvers and so on.

Q: Moving on, you left Romania in 1971?

KATZEN: Yes.

Q: Did you go directly to Mali?

KATZEN: I went directly to Mali via a few weeks in the States, and went from snow up to my knees to a temperature of about 93 or so.

Q: How did this assignment come about?

KATZEN: Bob Blake, who was our ambassador in Bamako, had been my DCM when we were together in Kinshasa, and asked if I would like to go join him in Bamako. I said I would be pleased to. He asked the department if that could occur, and the department agreed.

Q: Every DCM does different things. How did Bob Blake use you as his DCM?

KATZEN: Bob Blake had been minister to Paris prior to coming down to Mali. He was a very active and forceful ambassador, filled with the two most important human qualities I think we can have: creativity and imagination. To a great extent Bob, as he should have been, was the leading force in implementing our policy in Mali, and I was his executive officer, if you will. He had direct relations with each of the section chiefs, the AID

director, the Peace Corps director and so on, and played an active personal role in virtually every facet of embassy life, primarily on the AID side.

Q: Isn't it difficult, in a relatively small embassy, being a DCM to an ambassador who both knows the ropes and has been a DCM? Didn't you get in each other's way?

KATZEN: We didn't. I certainly learned a lot from Bob, and I guess as testimony of that, we remain very good friends. There is a danger of that, and I certainly know of a number of people who have had that difficulty, but it was not characteristic of my relationship with Bob. If anything, my relations with some of the heads of sections might have seemed a little bit overbearing to them, because after Bob had spoken with them directly about getting one or another thing done, I would be following up on it, and they may occasionally have felt that that was overkill. But again that certainly was not significant.

Q: What were our interests in Mali?

KATZEN: Our interests were primarily on the economic development side. This was a country that, at least the years I was there, seemed to have been going through parts of the Old Testament: the first year I was there we had drought; the second year we had floods; the third year we had migratory crickets; and I suspect a fourth year would have brought frogs, but I didn't stay around to watch. But it was to get the Malians to feel that someone way across the sea was interested in helping them solve their problems. They are a very proud people. The University of Timbuktu in Mali was a Fifteenth Century center of higher education. Our interest was getting them to have an improved existence.

One of the things I learned in Mali and was able to use in my subsequent assignment at the U.N. was a respect for a country's own national interests, if you will. And one amusing anecdote that I would cite was going to see the foreign minister one day with urgent instructions from Washington to get the Malians to support our position opposing the fishing of whales. Armed with that instruction, I went to see the foreign minister, who appeared in camouflage uniform with big heavy boots in the middle of April (it is incredibly hot in Mali then). The foreign minister simply didn't know, understandably, what a whale was. I drew a picture and I described as best I could what whales do. And he, acting from his national interests, said, "Jay, here's what I can do. I can promise you that if a whale ever appears in the Niger River, we will not fish him." For a man not all that elegant (as he would acknowledge) to come up with what preserved his national interests and satisfied ours was I think an important lesson.

Q: What was your impression of the effectiveness and the staffing of our AID program?

KATZEN: I think with our program in general (and it certainly was an observation which I had in a subsequent assignment to Africa in the Congo), we're not a very patient people. Unlike the Malians, the Chinese, the Israelis, and others, we want very quick results. This was the backbone of our own history. We went to the frontier, we built buildings, we built bridges, we fought wars, and all we had to know was how much money over how

many months of time and with how many people we could attain a given result. And then came Vietnam, and then came the war against poverty, and then came the drug war. And we saw that impatience was not going to serve us all that well.

I found with our AID program, Stu, that we have been very flighty. Beginning in the sixties, we worried a lot about education in Africa. And our initial thought was let's have the Africans educated at home. Well, they didn't really want to be educated at home. So we said great, we'll bring lots of Africans over to the States. They came to the States and they didn't want to go home again. So we said what we need to do now is to build infrastructure. So we built roads and tried to maintain them, with mixed results. Then we went on to basic human needs as a priority. Then we went to health as a priority. Then we went to agriculture as a priority.

I think that, as in a number of other problems with which you and I have been faced in the State Department over the years, when one tries to come up with only one answer, the "right" answer, you can do yourself a disservice: oftentimes, several answers may be "right". You remember for years how people worried, "Do we need specialists or generalists?" And people appointed commissions to study that. I think the obvious answer was that you need both.

Similarly, with the AID program. We both have met a lot of AID people in a lot of countries, with somewhat of a mixed bag of results. The people we had in Mali were very hard working, on problems that, basically because of Bob Blake's presence, were a lot more exotic than a number of other countries were handling. Pricing chickens and eggs was one of those. Trying to curb loss of grazing areas where cattle migrated was another. These were exciting areas. The tragedy of a lot of that research (and I think it's not egocentric to say so) is that there are a number of countries now working on those problems without making any reference to some of the earlier research that's been done.

Q: Were there any other sort of outside influences? I'm thinking of the Polisario movement or the Libyan thing. None of these quite touch on Mali, but how does Mali react to things that are happening within its periphery?

KATZEN: Mali was characterized at the U.N. as being, at that juncture, a fairly radical place. Whereas at home, none of the issues about which its representative in New York was radical was particularly important. So that while the Malians in New York would be very upset about Vietnam and other issues, for the life of the average Malian, the principal thing was just trying to get some water and to get on through the day.

Q: Your next incarnation was at the U.N., but while you were in Mali, did you find that U.N. votes and things were sort of driving us within Mali? If so, to what effect?

KATZEN: It's interesting, because I had seen that from both sides of the fence. While in Mali, seeing as we did how wretched the life was for most Malians, I could not understand the feeling that was generated via cables from New York that their

representatives there had voted against us again and that we ought somehow to punish them. When I was in New York, though, having seen how unimportant a lot of these issues are for the people on the ground, and that it was literally a handful of radicals, if you will, representing their country in New York who determined what that policy was going to be in order to remain an acceptable member of whatever group they happened to be participating in, then I did feel some anger and that that anger somehow ought to be translated into some sort of punishment. As in most punishments, though, they very frequently hurt the wrong people.

Q: Yes. Well, how did you find the government?

KATZEN: Very accessible. In fact, the man who was finance minister remains one of my closest friends. He's the senior African at the IMF here in Washington now. Very accessible. T
he women were very articulate and very open in their discussions: for instance, with my wife and other embassy wives about the feeling that maybe they shouldn't be required to have six children or more in a lifetime.

Q: What was behind this radicalism at the United Nations?

KATZEN: Members of the U.N., with the exception of the U.S. and very few others, at least at that time and now to a great extent, are members of regional groups, and these groups are not only geographical, but become ideological ones as well. So that if a nation were a member of a group espousing a cause that criticized the U.S., for instance, the Committee Against Apartheid at the U.N. at the time that I was there, there were a number of members of that committee who felt that they needed to be contrary regarding other issues the U.S. sought their assistance on because they wanted to keep their credentials respectable as members of that committee. Similarly, a lot of times countries would sympathize with our position on one or another issue-- on questions of Korea or Cambodia, which were annual votes, on Puerto Rico and similar questions--and yet when it came time to vote, they would either abstain, be absent, or oppose the United States. It would be more of a question of wanting to be perceived as members of their own group with respectable credentials than trying to taunt us or necessarily oppose us.

I do remember a very strong speech that Ambassador Moynihan gave at the U.N. in which he said, "Okay, from now on, I am going to treat every fellow member of the U.N. seriously. I've been accused of not doing that, and perhaps I haven't, but from today on, I am going to. And that means that I will consider you as an equal. Whenever any of you calls for a meeting, I will be there. I'll not send you to other people in the mission; I'm going to be there. And I'll listen seriously, and if I find value, I will perhaps change our own position. But," he added, "there are other requirements. Now that I'm treating you seriously that you behave seriously." And in addition to encouraging people to begin paying their Con Edison bills, he said, "That means that from now on, you cannot vote against the United States and come up to me later and say `Pat, you understand I really supported you, but our group felt that that was a position we had to take.'"

So there was merit in that. Obviously that was a seriousness which did not result in more votes on our side, but I think it's descriptive of a lot of the votes against us.

Q: While you were in Mali, were there any major issues that came up that you had to deal with particularly, either within the embassy or outside?

KATZEN: I would say they primarily were either administrative or on the economic development sides. Drought relief. The economic development was somewhat frustrating in that we were administrated by AID offices with overlapping functions in Abidjan and in Dakar. Communication, the telegraph and the phone were perfectly fine, but the question of knowing Washington...

Q: The bureaucratic communication.

KATZEN: That was a difficult problem.

Q: How did you get to the United Nations? You were there from '73 to '77. What were you doing?

KATZEN: I had volunteered for the slot specifically dealing with African affairs for years and years, and it finally opened up when Ernie Grigg, a wonderful Foreign Service officer who passed away a few years ago, was reassigned. It was the position within the political section dealing with Africa and subsequently including nonaligned affairs, and included the seat representing the United States on groups such as the Rhodesian Sanctions Committee and a variety of areas such as that. I also had responsibilities on the Committee of Twenty-Four, which was dealing with American territories overseas. I did a fair amount of travel in connection with the nonaligned movement, and basically was responsible for following the African representation at the United Nations.

Q: We've already discussed some of this, but you had two ambassadors while you were there: John Scali from '73 to '75, and Moynihan from '75 to '76. How did Scali work?

KATZEN: Well, I also had the wonderful Governor Scranton thereafter and the beginning of Andy Young's ambassadorship. John Scali was, as you know, a very key interlocutor during the Cuban missile crisis, and a fine man.

Q: He was from a television network.

KATZEN: ABC, right. John was a wonderful gentleman, a very compassionate man. He had some health problems and open heart surgery during that period, and after that was completed, felt so much better. He was a very well-respected and very effective ambassador. Ambassador Moynihan was also, I felt, a very effective ambassador, with quite a different style. And each would clearly acknowledge that difference. I found Governor Scranton a true gentleman, whose period in New York was longer than that of

his predecessor. He was truly loved by ambassadors of the African continent. We traveled to Africa in '76 and visited a number of capitals.

Each ambassador was very well respected, each with a certain difference in emphasis, and each certainly with a different style.

Q: In looking at Moynihan at the time, I was sort of applauding him because he was talking tougher than some others, but I'm wondering now. We're doing this interview in September of 1990...all of a sudden, because of a crisis in Iraq, Iraq having invaded Kuwait, the United Nations becomes very important to us. But we spent an awful lot of time kicking the United Nations around, particularly during the Reagan administration, but also Moynihan. I mean, there was a certain amount of posturing, showboating. Maybe I'm wrong, but I...

KATZEN: Realist that he is, I think his criticism, was not a quarrel over the institution, rather how the institution worked. And when he saw outrages such as Idi Amin and a disinclination at that time of Africans to criticize Idi Amin, he got upset.

Q: Idi Amin was the rather horrific ruler of Uganda at the time.

KATZEN: That's right. When Moynihan described Idi Amin in those terms, as a mass murderer, when he tore up in the presence of the U.N. General Assembly the obscene "Zionism is Racism" Resolution, he was criticizing not the institution so much as the people who were running the show. I think that that was very effective. It got people sobered up as to how an institution can work when they are honest. And the condemnation of Saddam Hussein's move into Kuwait, I think, is how the institution will work if its membership acts honestly and, clearly, if there is a confluence of national interests.

Q: You were dealing with, I would say, certainly the most interesting group--a lot of small countries, people who had recently gained independence, to whom many things were not really of major concern. You know, North and South Korea was not the biggest thing to somebody coming from Africa. How did you find their representatives? Were these people sort of free-wheeling on their own because their countries really didn't give a damn, or were they taking directions? Were there planned strategies? How would you characterize them?

KATZEN: There were several categories, Stu. There were ambassadors who were sent to New York in order to keep them out of plotting against their leaders at home. There were others who were given it as a fin-de-carriere assignment. There were other people who were in good communication with home, or at least pretended to be and blamed votes against us on their capitals. Most of them had broad instructions given to them before they left for New York, and they knew generally how strongly people pressuring them in New York felt about one or another issue.

Above all, and the common denominator, and maybe this sounds simplistic, but these are human beings, with the same concerns that we have--be it how to get their children through school or to pay the heating bill or when their salary check is arriving in the pouch. And I found, just by doing what we as diplomats do best, namely by being ourselves and being Americans and caring, that I was able at least to climb inside some people's heads and walk around and maybe make some difference. I don't pretend that on issues where a delegate might have been absent or abstaining to help our own issue or pursuant to our own request that he or she was doing that because of any identity with our position. Sometimes yes, but oftentimes our positions were not opposed just because maybe somebody had been nice to the voting delegate along the way.

For instance, there was one man, although he was not from Africa, who got into some trouble down in Gramercy Park in New York one Sunday morning. I got a call from the police station, and I went down and there was this gentleman with a shotgun, having done what he said he did at home on Sunday mornings, namely, shoot pigeons. And there was one of New York's Finest, very irate with this man who had at his feet a brace of pigeons and a smoking shotgun on his arm. Tempers were flaring, and we worked out an agreement whereby I was given the shotgun, which had not been registered, and promised to do it. The policeman promised this gentleman that there'd be nothing about the incident in the newspaper. And in return this gentleman gave him, the policeman, the pigeons.

Parenthetically, several years ago, some of the people for whom I now work wanted very much to see this gentleman, who subsequently had become rather an important international figure. Based on that pigeon incident, I was able easily to get them in to see him.

Q: You know, it has struck me that we used an awful lot of what you might call political capital around the world for years, particularly on the China issue, trying to keep what we in those days called Red China out of the United Nations, in which we at a certain point just sort of threw up our hands and allowed it to happen, or really pushed it. Also, on the Israeli issue. I mean, these were two things that, looking at it from some distance, you kind of wonder what difference did it make. But did you get so involved in the U.N. that these votes seemed much more important and we should do anything we could to get them? What was the feeling within the embassy staff?

KATZEN: There certainly was a lot of discussion on virtually every major issue. I arrived in New York right after the Chinese representation issue had been resolved in favor of the People's Republic. But on a number of subsequent issues there was, in great measure due to a very flexible and understanding succession of assistant secretaries, a very strong willingness to hear what the mission's views on one or another issue might have been.

Additionally, as you know, at that time the ambassador had a direct input to the national security advisor and to the president by virtue of being a member of the Cabinet. That was not abused, but certainly in the case of each of the ambassadors whom I mentioned, and very definitely Andrew Young as well, there was a direct pipeline available at will to

the president himself. So we were very fortunate in being able to exercise that channel should it have become necessary.

Q: Again, as I asked you about Romania, how did you work?

KATZEN: The whole year pretty much revolved around the General Assembly, which met September through right around Christmastime. Then there was a hiatus during January and February, and various committee meetings, travel, and constantly the Security Council sessions that arose. During the General Assembly, we would have mission meetings every morning, at which time there were five ambassadors, each of whom would set forth his or her agenda for the day. We then would comment on what was going on in each of our committees. We had American representatives, including appointed representatives during the GA, present in each of the main General Assembly committees as well as in the Plenary. Those delegates would speak on virtually each issue. We would prepare reporting telegrams on what other people had to say. We would seek instructions based upon preliminary texts of draft resolutions. We would get our instructions and prepare, with the department, comments in explanation of our vote. It was a very busy day.

There were moments, I must admit, when you were, at two- thirty, three o'clock in the morning, sitting on the floor collating a book to be spoken from the next day, when you kind of wondered about its importance. But those moments were infrequent. It was heady stuff. And it was heady stuff principally because of the quality of the people with whom you were working. As so many people have said, if the U.N. didn't exist, somebody would have to have invented it.

Q: In the time you were there, were there any sort of issues where, if it hadn't been there, there would have been real problems?

KATZEN: Oh, I think the role of the U.N. at the Yom Kippur War was very important. The role of the U.N. insofar as Namibia is concerned was important. The role of the U.N. in Cyprus certainly was important.

And the specialized agencies, I think, are not stressed in importance significantly. The specialized agencies, although many of them have become politicized and are politicized among others by the PLO, are very important institutions getting the work done without the spotlight being on them. A number of them are bloated personnelwise, but overall I think they're doing a pretty good job.

Q: Well, you were there during the early time of Andy Young. I have the impression, and this is only from reading newspaper accounts, that he was sort of a free spirit, particularly with regards to Africa, and sort of felt this was his bailiwick, he being black, but that he really wasn't necessarily in step with the administration. What was your impression at the time you were there?

KATZEN: I have the feeling that Ambassador Young did believe that he, as an African-American, helped in developing a closer, more open relationship with Africans and perhaps with people in the developing world in general. I feel that his philosophy on that was very much shared by President Carter. Where disputes originated, as you recall, was with what I understand were unauthorized contacts with representatives of the PLO.

Q: That was after your time, wasn't it?

KATZEN: Yes, it was.

Q: What about the sort of specialized ambassadors, who would be appointed to represent us at various times, who really came from political life? What was your impression of how they worked and their effectiveness?

KATZEN: Well, again, I think perhaps I was just lucky in being exposed to a succession of extraordinary people. I worked with Pearl Bailey through two sessions. And while there were feelings that Pearl's background was not one conducive to that kind of assignment, she was super.

Q: She's a very famous singer, who died just about two weeks ago.

KATZEN: Yes, and just a marvelous, marvelous person, and very, very effective in that environment. Similarly, Len Garment came for a session, and Len has one of the sharpest minds and pencils going. John Scali, of course, was not a career diplomat. John Scali, after seeing my cables for a few months, called me up to his office and said, "Katzen, why in the world didn't anybody ever teach you how to write?" Scali taught me how to write: it was not a very pleasant exercise but it was one that was long overdue.

I know a lot of our colleagues have not had, on occasion, pleasant times with certain people out of the career, but I've been fortunate, and I can't think, literally, of many with whom I've not had a good working relationship.

Q: You left there in 1977. Did you go directly to Brazzaville?

KATZEN: No, I came to Washington in February of '77, to help advise Vice President Mondale on his upcoming meeting in Vienna with Prime Minister Vorster of South Africa concerning apartheid. Then I went to the National War College in that summer, August and September. And rather than continuing with that class, which would have graduated the following year, I was assigned to reopen our embassy in Brazzaville, in the Congo, which had been closed for I think 13- odd years.

Q: Well, quickly back. What was your impression of Walter Mondale and how he dealt with a diplomatic issue like that?

KATZEN: Walter Mondale is a very intelligent man, who wanted to, and did, absorb literally whatever information you put before him and, more importantly, came up with, in his own mind, the gist of the issue before him, the questions that needed to be asked about it, and in what direction we might proceed. Along with that, a wonderfully decent man with a superb sense of humor, and a real gentleman.

Q: Could you explain what the situation was in the Congo before you went and how the assignment came about?

KATZEN: Nicholas Mondjo is a Congolese who presently is working for the current president of the Congo. Mondjo had been Congolese ambassador at the U.N. for a long time. He and I, and he and Bill Schaufele, who was an Ambassador in our mission then and became assistant secretary for African Affairs and later ambassador to Poland, discussed the reestablishment of diplomatic relations. And it was in '77 that Mondjo and Schaufele, ultimately joined by Cyrus Vance and the Congolese foreign minister, came up with an agreement to reopen the American Embassy in Brazzaville. The Congolese, for their part, promised to respect our diplomats, which had been the reason for the closing in the first place, our people having been thrown in the slammer, as we discussed earlier. I had been asked if I would like to go out to the Congo to reopen that embassy, and did indeed go out there in October of '77 for that purpose.

The chancery was like a sealed tomb in a way. When the doors were opened, there were packs of cigarettes that were still lying on desks, and small change, and mail that hadn't been opened that was dated all those years past and so on.

We had a very, for me, satisfying time in pioneering those days. The Congolese were very curious to see what we were going to be offering them. The Congolese president at the time, a man called Yhombi-Opango, a military officer, was extraordinarily friendly. He had sent a Mercedes for my use to the plane when I first got off, which had the Soviets very upset, because the very act led them to be curious about what the Congolese were doing.

The Congolese had been using Marxism-Leninism for years as a mobilization tool, and I think it was more that than it was of any deep, ingrained philosophy. And I think the French, whose commercial interests there were far more profound than ours, certainly felt that as well.

In my first meeting with the president, he asked what I was bringing the Congo. After getting through the platitudes of friendship and others, he wanted me to get down to more concrete terms. And I replied that the only way I could do that was to travel all over the country, get to know the people, meet all the ministers and so on.

And for the first time, a foreign diplomat within his presidency did that--visited all the provinces by one means or another, including most of the time military aircraft, called on

each of the ministers, called on the party officials, and got to know the country and its demands.

And it developed into a very informal relationship, the president and I exchanging birthday cakes and things like that. It was quite different from certainly any of the previous experiences I had had and I like to think set a backdrop against which the successful development of our relations with the Congolese continued.

Q: The Soviets had been, as you said previously, meddling there and been responsible for much of the turning against the United States which eventually severed relations. What was their role by that time?

KATZEN: Well, I'll give you an anecdote again. It happened at a Soviet National Day reception, shortly after I arrived. I'd opened our embassy speaking in Lingala, which was a language that good old FSI had beaten into me years previously. And that night, the Soviet ambassador and the Congolese foreign minister and I were chatting, and the Soviet was chiding me and said, "Ah, obviously you are with the CIA because you speak the local language."

To which the foreign minister, with whom I had not much of a rapport having just met him, replied, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, there obviously then are millions of CIA agents here, because look at how many Congolese speak Lingala." Which I thought was a great reinforcer at that very early stage.

The Soviets remained very suspicious of what we were doing. They didn't need to be, because there was nothing untoward that we were plotting. Our early days there were focused on economic assistance, primarily on the American private sector whence I generated a fair amount of capital.

I came back from the Congo once on consultations and was asked by the then head of African Affairs for AID why I didn't want an official AID presence. I said I had three questions, and if any of them could be replied to as I felt it ought to, I could well change the recommendation.

The first was: Could AID come up with an implement, a physical object, say a hoe for an agricultural project, in less than 2.3 years from the time I signed an agreement? The reply was no, and for health material, that it took 3.2 years.

I next asked whether they could possibly do a feasibility study that took less money than the project itself might. Again, a no.

And thirdly, could they field an AID person for less than $100,000 a year? And again, the answer was no.

And I said therefore I felt that the private American sector could indeed focus on getting money there--whatever their reasons were. This was the early time of some American companies wanting tax deductions for significant overseas losses. And if they were getting money on investments in the Congo that were benefitting the Congolese, a number of them didn't seem to mind if they in fact generated tax losses domestically.

Q: Were there any great problems other than just the problem of getting things going?

KATZEN: No, but that was a very big problem. That was a problem that was far more significant than the bilateral political problem. The question of priorities. And, in candor, I was disappointed that a number of people on my staff were not quite as enthusiastic about simply being in the Congo and having what I still think was a very special time in a special place as I was.

Q: Were these not from the Africanist group, would you say, or had they just run out of steam?

KATZEN: Some were, some weren't. I think to a great degree many were affected by a syndrome which I'm critical of but I understand at the same time.

I remember in Leopoldville, a long time before and in much more primitive experiences, a number of the embassy family wanted a commissary. And it was, as Mac Godley did things, agreed that although he personally did not want a commissary, the embassy would have a vote and that majority vote would rule. The embassy decided overwhelmingly in that vote indeed to have a commissary. Well, the commissary was constructed, and it stocked (in addition to five different kinds of corn flakes) sardines imported from Portugal, which could easily be obtained at da Costas's grocery around the corner. Now you had a commissary, and with that the attendant lack of a real requirement to learn French, because you didn't after all have to use that French in your shopping, which was one of the key intercourses of a normal day. Well, not having French, it was hard to talk to all those other people out there, so let's all live together. Well, the galloping development then moved into embassy housing, motor pools, embassy dart clubs, bridge clubs, softball leagues and the rest.

As I say, I don't fully sympathize with it, but I understand it. But by the same token, I would say that while I am full of respect for our wonderful people in our service who are overseas under now far more trying experiences perhaps than we experienced, I think that some of those features are not why one ought to go overseas.

Q: Brazzaville is just across the river (although it's a big river) from Kinshasa. Was this helpful or a hindrance to you as you were trying to start this thing up?

KATZEN: They were, in Kinshasa, very helpful to me. They clearly had their own requirements. There were areas on the security side, just as I mentioned earlier with Mali

on the economic side, where the physical distance, as well as priorities being based upon a regional framework, probably gave us a lower priority than one would have wished.

By the same token, problems that are attendant to opening a new post did affect the security side. My house, which overlooked the river, had a steep stone wall leading up into it. There were very inexpensive and ordinary ways of protecting that building, including simply improved physical security.

I received a tip-off that we were going to be robbed one night. I communicated that to the regional security man across the river, and was told that the only way to protect the house properly was to have some way of discouraging people who might use alpine-equipped boots to scale the wall. Well, most Congolese, including the burglars who did indeed break into our house that night, traveled barefoot.

So I think that with regional assignments of responsibility, these things do occur. On balance, though, certainly Walt Cutler and his embassy in Kinshasa were very helpful. [RECORDING SPEED SLOWED; DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND]

Stu, I guess that one thing that we need to, and do, ask ourselves frequently as we pick up the papers, especially in these exciting times, is where did we fit into it. You are the author of a book which quite properly prevents people who have given glorious service to America from being forgotten--our consular service. I think we can take pride in being part of a process which has brought us to the point we are. I like to think that during those pioneering days in Africa and elsewhere we taught a few people whose, perhaps, grandchildren now are foreign ministers, that we represented democracy and freedom and that these ideals and capitalism all are worthwhile. I think we can take a lot of pride in being there in those early days and being a part of that process.

I'm very stuck too by a statement that Senator Moynihan made the other day, in which Moynihan said that we have to understand that what President Bush is doing now is forming a pattern for international behavior for the next 25 to 50 years. And that if, for example, he were to send a hit man into Baghdad, or were to authorize those volunteers whom I suspect already are there to do that, he would be encouraging a world order characterized by assassinations.

As the Hungarian ambassador here told me at Christmastime, "You Americans, as you tidy up the end of World War II, mustn't forget the reasons for World War I." We can't go in that direction. And I think that the president is indeed, and to a great degree perhaps because of his own years at the U.N., very conscious of the need to use that instrument, and to use some of that groundwork that you and I can take some pride in participating in for assistance in developing that world order for the future.

Q: Well, Jay, one final question. Having left the Congo, why didn't you continue on?

KATZEN: Well, I felt that I had done so much of what I wanted to do in government. I was not enamored, frankly, of the Carter years, or of a lot of its philosophy of foreign affairs. By the same token, I was sufficiently realistic to know that that was not going to go on forever either.

I received an offer to leave government and go to work for a single company, and decided that I didn't want to swap one bureaucracy for another. The gentleman who had offered me that job, who was the chairman of that company, asked instead if I would serve as an advisor to a consortium of five chairmen.

As each of us leave the womb, we ask absurd questions in the expectation that we'll get a "no" which will enable us to return to the comfort we know. Each question I asked came up with a positive answer. I went to Personnel, to our mutual friend, Andy Steigman, and they suggested my going on leave without pay status, which I did. I extended that several times, learned then that I could retire, and did indeed do that. The department, though, during that period I was on leave and, in candor, subsequently, has made several very flattering offers to return to government. And several times I've been very tempted. My concern is, were I to do that, whether I could reconstruct thereafter what I presently have, given the brighter and younger people who are available now to take up what I am doing in industry.

Q: You're basically a consultant to firms dealing in various parts of the world.

KATZEN: Yes, right.

Q: Well, Jay, I want to thank you very much. I really appreciate it very much.

KATZEN: Thank you, Stu.

End of interview